6-17-2009

UNH Researcher Receives Presidential Environmental Award

Beth Potier
UNH Media Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/news

Recommended Citation
https://scholars.unh.edu/news/127

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Administrative Offices at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.
UNH Researcher Receives Presidential Environmental Award
DURHAM, N.H. - University of New Hampshire professor Frederick Short was co-recipient of the prestigious Coastal America Partnership Award - the only environmental award of its kind given by the U.S. president - for his contributions to a project that restored eelgrass to coastal salt ponds in Rhode Island. The highest level award for partnership efforts, this award from the president recognizes outstanding collaborative, multi-agency and multi-stakeholder efforts to accomplish coastal restoration, preservation, protection, and education projects.

Short and other partners were honored last week for work on the South Coast Habitat Restoration Project, which restored ecologically important eelgrass meadows to tidal ponds at the Ninigret Park and National Wildlife Refuge in Charlestown, R.I. Led by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the project was one of just six nationwide to receive 2008 Coastal America Partnership Awards.

Eelgrass (Zostera marina) provides important habitat to shellfish and finfish, says Short, a research professor of natural resources and marine science. In Ninigret Pond, construction of stone jetties half a century ago had created a natural funnel that deposited large amounts of ocean sand inside the ponds, burying formerly plentiful eelgrass beds.

Short's contributions to the effort included field work to determine what factors were limiting eelgrass growth in the salt ponds. In addition, the project utilized an eelgrass restoration site selection model Short developed with funding from the UNH Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) and the NOAA Restoration Center. The model synthesizes previously collected data on bathymetry, sediment type, water quality, wave exposure and past and present eelgrass distribution to identify and prioritize locations for eelgrass restoration.

"Restoring eelgrass, either by seeding or transplanting, is a costly and time-consuming process," says Short. "This site selection model helps coastal managers find locations most favorable to eelgrass growth." In this project, Short notes, site selection was successful; in the 40 acres of restored eelgrass habitat in Ninigret Pond, the largest of the project's salt ponds, eelgrass growth has exceeded expectations.

Although his "home lab" is UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory on New Hampshire's Great Bay, Short is no stranger to the Rhode Island coastal ponds. "The award meant a great deal to me, as I first started work in these coastal ponds for my master's degree at the University of Rhode Island back in the '70s," he says.
In addition to UNH, the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, and the Army Corps of Engineers, partners on the South Coast Habitat Restoration Project were the NOAA Restoration Center, R.I. Department of Environmental Management, the University of Rhode Island, the Salt Ponds Coalition, and the towns of South Kingstown, Charlestown and Westerly, R.I.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, space-grant and community-engaged university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

-30-

Photograph available to download:

Caption: Frederick Short was co-recipient of the prestigious Presidential Coastal America Partnership Award for his contribution to a project that restored eelgrass to coastal salt ponds in Rhode Island.

Credit: Courtesy of Frederick Short.